

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Process the Kentucky Board of Education follows in certifying non-public schools

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 156.160(3)

History/Background:

Existing Policy: KRS 156.160 (3) includes the provision requiring that any private, parochial, or church school may voluntarily comply with curriculum, certification, and textbook standards established by the Kentucky Board of Education and be certified upon application to the Board by such schools.

Between 1985 and 1990, to comply with the requirements of KRS 156.160 (3), the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) adopted a process for certifying non-public schools that voluntarily applied to the Board. The process was a modification of the public schools accreditation process that had been in place since 1981.

The non-public school certification/accreditation process under 704 KAR 10:022 included five major standards compared to eleven major standards in the public school accreditation process. Each process involved a self-study, on-site team visit, and the development of a three-year plan to correct any areas that failed to meet required standards. Both public and non-public schools were on a five-year renewal schedule. The cost of certifying/accrediting non-public schools was supported with the non-public school portion of State Chapter II funds.

The public and non-public school accreditation process was input and process driven with the attention given to the outcomes of the education system such as student achievement and successful transition to work, postsecondary education and the military. The 1990 Education Reform Act shifted the focus of Kentucky's education system from an input and process based system to an outcome-based system and eliminated the public school accreditation and monitoring process.

The shift from the previous accreditation process for public and non-public schools resulted in a need for the KBE to implement an alternative approach for the voluntary certification/accreditation of non-public schools as required by KRS 156.160 (3). Department staff and the Board discussed two options. The first was the involvement of the Kentucky Non-Public Schools Commission (KNPSC) in implementing required standards and procedures for reviewing accredited non-public schools requesting certification from the KBE. The second was the assignment of Department staff to oversee the implementation of the required standards and procedures for reviewing non-public

schools requesting certification from the KBE. The Board decided that the rigor of the required standards could be successfully implemented through a multi-tiered certification process carried out by the KNPSC with final approval resting with the KBE. The involvement of the KNPSC was thought to be time and staff efficient for the Department and the KBE.

To develop a voluntary certification process that would meet the requirements of KRS 156.160 (3), Department staff and the KNPSC worked to establish minimum standards. These standards met both the requirements of KRS 156.160 (3) and the standards of regional and national non-public schools accrediting associations. These standards were presented in great detail and with much review by the KBE. They were subsequently approved by the KBE.

There are seven requirements common to each of the recognized accrediting associations. These components are:

- Self-study is required prior to accreditation.
- The school must have a site visit by a trained team prior to initial accreditation and with the renewal of accreditation.
- The school must demonstrate high academic standards for all students as demonstrated by implementation of curriculum standards established by the KBE.
- The school must publish a statement of nondiscrimination based on race or ethnic background and must demonstrate adherence to that policy.
- School personnel must have on file legally required background checks.
- Administrative, instructional and support staff must be qualified, certified and competent to perform the duties assigned to them.
- Staff must participate in ongoing professional development.

The rationale for the support of the certification of non-public schools was as follows:

- Students attending KBE certified non-public schools have full recognition of credits and coursework when transferring to a public school or another non-public school. Credit and coursework are readily accepted.
- Students attending non-public schools that get certified through the KBE process are eligible for the full amount of funds from the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship.
- The rigorous process required in becoming accredited and then certified by the state gives the non-public school credibility with parents and the community.
- The Beginning Teacher Internship Program (KRS 161.030 (5)) and Principal Internship Program require an internship be in an accredited school. The internship may be served in a public or non-public school that meets the KBE certification standards.

The Process

To implement the approved standards, a multi-tiered certification process for non-public schools was put into place. In this process, the KNPSC was given the responsibility to ensure the member state, regional, national and international accrediting associations met the approved minimum requirements. Further, the KNPSC would review the accreditation results from all non-public schools requesting certification by the KBE to ensure the school met the minimum requirements. To

ensure the ongoing quality of the certification and accreditation processes, the KNPSC became a member of the National Council of Private School Accreditation (NCPSA). NCPSA is a recognized member of the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA). In addition to NCPSA, CITA is composed of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and Western Association of Schools and Colleges. These associations are also recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

The multi-tiered procedure for a nonpublic school to become certified requires any private, parochial or church school wishing to pursue certification from the KBE to undertake the following steps:

1. Contact one of the accrediting agencies recognized by the KBE and the KNPSC and make the necessary arrangements to complete the required process to become accredited. The following are the recognized accrediting agencies and the number of schools they accredit in Kentucky:
 - American Association of Christian Schools - 1 school accredited
 - Association of Christian Schools International - 22 schools accredited
 - Association of Christian Teachers and Schools – 1 school accredited
 - Association of Montessori International – 2 schools accredited
 - American Montessori Society – 1 school accredited
 - International Christian Accrediting Association – 4 schools accredited
 - Independent Schools Association of the Central States – 11 schools accredited
 - Kentucky Nonpublic Schools Commission - 118 schools accredited
 - Kentucky-Tennessee Conference of Seventh-Day Adventist – 4 schools accredited
 - National Lutheran School Accreditation - 2 schools accredited
 - Southern Association of Colleges and Schools - 28 schools accredited
2. After successfully engaging in the accreditation process, contact the KNPSC and initiate the process to have the Commission present the school to the KBE for certification.
3. After the necessary accreditation reports and documentation are received and reviewed by the commission staff and a committee of the commission, the results of the committee work are reviewed and discussed by the total KNPSC. After discussion, the full commission makes a decision regarding approval of the school applying for certification.
4. Upon an affirmative vote by the KNPSC, the school is recommended to the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) for presentation to the KBE for certification. KDE staff verifies and reviews with the Commission that the school has met all the criteria required by KBE.
5. After consideration of the KNPSC recommendations, the KBE may grant certification to the school.
6. The school granted certification would receive a letter from KDE staff confirming the certification by the KBE. This letter includes the beginning and ending dates for the certification. At the end of the certification period, to remain a certified school, the school

must submit thorough and extensive updated accreditation reports to the KNPSC and request that its school be placed before the KBE again for certification.

Leisa Speer, Superintendent of the Louisville Archdiocesan Schools and Chairperson of the Kentucky Non-Public Schools Commission, will be present with KDE staff at the August Board meeting to address any questions about the process.

Policy Issue(s):

The Board has requested a review of the existing process and consideration of any needed changes in the current process for certifying non-public schools.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Kentucky has a goal that all children receive at least two years of postsecondary education. KRS 164.7885 (8) and KRS 164.7885 (12) define respectively an eligible high school student and an eligible high school for the purpose of participation in Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) program. An eligible high school means any Kentucky public high school, and any private, parochial, or church school located in Kentucky that has been certified by the Kentucky Board of Education as voluntarily complying with curriculum, certification, and textbook standards established by the Kentucky Board of Education. Non-public schools see the Kentucky Board of Education certification as valuable to their students and an encouragement for them to work with one of the ten state, regional or national accrediting agencies. The certification of non-public schools has a positive impact for getting all of Kentucky's children to proficiency because of the standards identified by each of the accrediting agencies.

Contact Person:

Johnnie Grissom
Associate Commissioner
Special Instructional Services
(502) 564-4970
Johnnie.Grissom@education.ky.gov

Pauline Carr, Director
Div. of Federal Programs
and Instructional Equity
(502) 564-3791
Pauline.Carr@education.ky.gov

Robert Simpson, Consultant
Div. of Federal Programs
and Instructional Equity
(502) 564-3791
Robert.Simpson@education.ky.gov

Deputy Commissioner

Commissioner of Education

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